

M. T. MARTIN, Proprietor.

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CORRECTIONS.

Exegesis of Matthew 16:18.

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In this Scripture, there are three things promised of the church of Christ. I will examine them in their order.

1. *The foundation of the church.*—"Upon this rock." There are three interpretations of this phrase. First, The Roman Catholic view—that Peter is the rock here spoken of, and that Christ intended to build the church upon this apostle. There is a number of views held by some Protestants that may be placed under this head. Christ meant Peter when he said this rock, but he was only to be first among his equals. Peter was to lay the first foundation of it in his preaching to the Jews (Acts 2: 14, 41) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10: 44, 45). Second, Some hold that Christ meant by this rock the confession that Peter had just made—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The third and last is held by the great majority of Christians—This rock means Christ himself, and that He intended to build His church on none other than himself. This opinion I hold and will try to confirm.

The first of the words in the original cannot be truly appreciated by an English reader. The word *Petros* or Peter means a stone. The original reads thus: "I tell you, likewise, you are named *Stone* (*Petros*), and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build my church." There is a distinction between these two words that should be understood in order to arrive at a clear meaning of this passage. These words are not the same, neither have they the same meaning. *Petros* is a noun of the second declension, masculine gender, and means a stone. Labeled and Scott define it as a "piece of rock, a cliff, and is thus distinguished from *petra*." They also say that it is a synonym of *lithos*, a stone, generally one that can be thrown. But *petra* is a noun of the first declension, and feminine gender. The same authorities define it as a "massive rock, a cliff, and is thus distinguished from *petros*." The one is a stone, the other a massive rock. With this explanation, interpret what Jesus said to Peter: "Thou art Peter, a little stone, but upon this massive rock, which rock is myself, I will build my church."

Christ meant Peter when he said upon this rock, why did he change the word? Peter is never called *petra*, but Christ is often called a rock. Twice he called the rock (*petra*) of offense. 1 Cor. 10: 4 can not be misunderstood: "For they all drank of that spiritual rock (*petra*) that followed them; and that rock (*petra*) was Christ." Add to this 1 Cor. 11: 30 and the proof is complete: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ would never have built his church on a fallible man, much less upon a confession; but he built it on the Rock of Ages. It is certain that if this Scripture, which we are examining, does not teach that Peter is the foundation stone of the church of Christ, no other does. Why should this passage, in the midst of so many other Scriptures, stand isolated and alone?

2. *Jesus is the builder of his church.*—"I will build my church." Christ not only founded, but built his church. A work so important was never given into the hands of mortal man. It mattered not how pious or zealous he might be, this was the peculiar work of the Son of God. The Jews claim that it was through the manifestation of angels that the law was given on Sinai, and the Hebrew commonwealth founded; but it was by the work of Christ alone that the Christian church was built. "I will build my church." We are then, not to search the family of Adam or Abraham for a church. We are not to look to Mount Sinai that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, nor to the shadowy dispensations of the past. Neither will we pause with John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets. If these inspired men, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, were not thought worthy of this great honor, what shall we say of others who have endeavored to build Christ's church for him? even though they should claim that they were *sent* out to raise up a holy people?

"Will build" *Gothos* generally means will build, but it may mean shall complete. That would make Christ say that he would complete the church, and that he would

complete the work he had already begun. This interpretation is sustained by eminent critics, and seems to be the true meaning. Jesus had already laid the foundation of his church, and now he will complete it, and send it forth into the world. Scripture must always harmonize. Before this period, Jesus had said: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violence take it by force." This text was written before the one we are examining. The kingdom must, therefore, have existed at this time, or the violence would not have taken it by force.

3. *The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.* Two words in our version are translated hell—*Gehenna* and *hades*. *Gehenna* is properly rendered hell, and corresponds with the popular idea of that word. *Hades*, on the other hand, is very improperly translated hell. It is confounded of a not, and *chthon* to see; that which is *unseen, invisible, or obscure*. It is invariably used to translate the Hebrew word *Sheol*, which has the same meaning as the above. *Hades* occurs eleven times in the New Testament, and ten times it is translated hell, and once grave. In the Old Testament, hell occurs thirty-three times. Twice it is *chthon*, death; the other thirty-one times it is *hades*.

The king's translators were often constrained to depart from their own rule and render this word *grave*. *Hell* will not make sense in many passages. The following is said of Jacob: "You will bring down my grave with you to the grave." "I will go down into the grave mourning." It will not do in speaking of Jesus to say, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," for the soul of Jesus was not in hell, but *hades*. What, then, did Jesus mean by the "gates of *hades*?" I answer, death. I will present several examples of the use of this phrase in sacred and profane writers to confirm and illustrate this. Homer uses *chthon* *hades* *hades*, translated by Pope, "who can think one thing, and another tell." My soul delivers him as the gates of hell. The Scholiast says this *periphrasis* translates "A periphrasis of death." Theocritus says, *hades* *hades* *hades*, the shall knock at the gates of *hades*, i. e., he shall die. In Euripides the chorus sings, that if Esculapius were there, Alceste might then have *hades* *hades*, the gates of *hades*, and return to life. "For he can raise the dead." Hezekiah said, "I said I will go down to the gates of *hades*," I should die, but I have recovered. Dr. George Campbell, after thoroughly investigating this subject, remarks, "The gates of *hades* is a very natural periphrasis for death. We have sufficient evidence, sacred and profane, that it is its meaning." And the learned Dr. Whitby says it means "death." Therefore, we conclude that Jesus said that his church should never die, and should be perpetuated through all ages. "Lo I am," says our law-giver, "with you always, even unto the end of the world." Times and seasons may change, kingdoms rise and fall, but the church of Christ shall stand forever. How well does this verify the ancient promise, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan. 2: 44.)

"Shall not prevail against it." This is strong language, but the Greek is still stronger. *On hatis* *charis* *entes*, shall not be strong against it. Not only that the gates of *hades* shall not prevail, but shall not even be strong against the church. This church is strong because it is built upon a rock, built by the great Architect, Christ Jesus, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[We have seen nothing on this text so clear as this. At a convenient time, we shall add an article on the signification of the name Peter (*petros*), as applied by our Lord to Simon, unless Bro. Christian will take the work off our hands.—Ed.]

Letters to Young Converts From an Old Man.

LETTER EIGHTH—FORGIVEN GROUND.

I once read of a gentleman who, having advertised for a carriage, driver, had three applications for the place on the same morning. The first, on being called in, the gentleman, in order to test his fitness for the position, and whether his life and that of his family would be safe in his hands, asked him how near he could drive to a place of danger, the verge of a precipice, for example,

and be safe. He replied that he could go within a foot of it, had frequently done so, and could do it again. The gentleman shook his head, "That does not quite suit me," said he, dismissed him and called the second. He expressed the utmost confidence that he could drive within an inch of any precipice with perfect safety. He also was dismissed, and the third one was called, to whom he propounded the same question. "I don't know," said he, "I never tried; when I know there is danger, my rule is to shun it as far as possible." "You are the man I want," said he.

I present another illustration, somewhat similar. Some young men were setting out on their first voyage, as sailors. An old veteran of the sea addressed them, as the ship was about to sail: "Boys, remember that in a storm it may not be best to venture near enough to the rocks to pictures of them."

The lesson I wish to impress on you from these illustrations is, that there is a line drawn, which, if you cross, you will be on forbidden ground, and that it is not safe for any Christian, especially a young Christian, to venture near enough to examine it very closely, or, as the old sailor said, "draw pictures of it." Let us try to find it, and examine it at a safe distance.

It is not generally popular to be singular, nor is it always pleasant; but to the Christian, to every Christian, times come when it is absolutely necessary. Christians are a *peculiar* people, and you, my dear young friends, if you are what you profess to be, must make up your minds to it, that to be a Christian, you must sometimes bear the unpleasantness, and boldly meet the unpopularity of being singular.

Standing on the bank of a clear stream, you will sometimes see a shoal of little fish floating quietly with the current; the question may be raised, "Are those fish alive?" I suppose so. I see they move, though they are only going with the current. But presently you see them spread their fins, and boldly shoot up stream; no one asks now, "Are those fish alive?" Now, it may have been more pleasant for them to go with the current; certainly it is not always necessary to do otherwise, but it is sometimes necessary. So, to be a live Christian, you will sometimes have to stem the current, however trying.

In the world, not of the world. What a contradiction. Who can explain it? Who can understand it? There have been some things in every age revealed to babes that the wise and prudent—as the world counts wise and prudent—have tried to see. This is one of them.—in it, but not of it.

Here we find the LINE. There is a line between you and the world, a line, though to the world invisible, still plainly revealed to you. I do not draw it, the church has not drawn it; that is a work the church cannot do, and dare not if she could. For the church to attempt that work, would be to usurp the authority of the King. The Holy Spirit, in dictating the Scriptures of truth, has drawn the dividing line—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is strong talk, but it is very plain, intelligible talk; a child can understand it. You cannot love God, and love the world. This is the line, the crossing of which takes the Christian upon forbidden ground.

There are business pursuits, and there are what worldlings call pleasures, that in their very nature are purely worldly, in which no Christian can engage without violating his or her consecration vows; to engage in either discovers a love of the world. If you love the world, if you are of the world, you will be like the world; if you are like the world, there is no peculiarity; but Christians are a peculiar people.

Before arraying the parties on their respective sides of the line that the Holy Spirit has drawn, it will be well to correct a few mistakes sometimes made by some on both sides of the line.

The first I notice, is a fallacy in reasoning, founded on a principle that is true. Men may, and often do, reason falsely, from true premises. Arminianism and Antinomianism, which are only the two extremes of the heresy, are simply false conclusions drawn from the same grand and glorious truth.

It is certainly true that the State permits the citizen to do things as a citizen, that the church forbids the Christian to do as a Christian. One conclusion reached by worldling from this truth is, that the whole sin in the matter is because the party acting is in the church; it may be a sin if done by one in the church, but can be none if done by one out of it. Such is the reasoning. The fallacy consists in supposing that your church relations may make that sinful which would otherwise be innocent; whereas, the church forbids nothing but what God forbids, and God forbids all sin every where, at all times. God, it is true, permits worldlings to take their course, and accept the consequences, "So shall they eat of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices"; but that way is none the less sinful because he permits them to choose it; and he has assured us that "all the world—and this includes all worldlings—lieth in the wicked one."

Out of that fallacy has grown another; that in becoming a Christian, you surrender certain rights and privileges that you might otherwise have enjoyed with impunity. A plain, common-sense question: Has any one, in the church or out of it, a right to do a wrong? You may have surrendered your *unscripted* privilege of defying the Almighty, and in so doing have escaped the consequences; but a more pernicious fallacy was never infused into the human heart, by the father of lies himself, than this—that the world, lying in the wicked one, is a state of higher or privilege than being brought from the power and dominion of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

There is another mistake, or rather fallacy, on which, by way of getting out the subject, a little ought to be said. It is the wide-spread notion that what we ordinarily term *business*, that is, secular pursuits, which men obtain their means of living, is something separate and apart from religion. Hence it is very common to hear of some branches of business as less favorable to a life of piety than others. Those who reason thus, of course overlook the important truth that business itself is religion, and religion is business; that so far from being true, that any department of legitimate business is a hindrance to a life of piety, every business in which a Christian may engage at all, is a part of that life; that every Christian must be "religiously industrious, and industriously religious."

There is not, and cannot be, any corner in a Christian's heart, or life, or business, in which Christ has no share. From these premises I deduce two rules, by which you may be able to decide with infallible certainty, concerning every conceivable pursuit, whether of business or pleasure, whether it is or is not on the forbidden side of the line.

First, All that lies on the *wrong* side of the line, needs either apology, defense, or concealment; whatever is on the *right* side needs nothing of the kind. So, when you hear the advocates of any measure plead any excuse for it, and especially that old stereotyped excuse, "No harm," take it as a warning, and get further away from the line; nothing on the right side, which is the only safe side, needs any defense, much less that defense.

Second, Whatever you cannot connect with your religion, as a part of it, may safely be put down on the wrong side.

True, we do not often hear of worshipping God at the plow, in the work-shop, the counting room; perhaps few ever thought that that poor, toil-worn and care-worn mother, was offering to God a living sacrifice, of equally acceptable heart-worship, with the service of the pulpit itself, but it is true. The business that is not connected with your religion, is as suspicious as the religion that is not connected with your business.

From these principles, and these rules, we reach the conclusion, that whatever is purely worldly, ends and aims to be accomplished, and means employed for their accomplishment, all worldly, is to the Christian forbidden.

What merchant, or mechanic, or manufacturer, ever thought it necessary to make an apology for his business? What farmer, or lawyer, or physician, ever offered an excuse for being such? Every legitimate business is its own justification. Some of the brightest types of Christian character that ever adorned the Christian name, have adorned these professions, and these pursuits—all of them—and have carried, and still carry, their business into their religion, as they carry their religion into their business. But why? What professing Christian will dare say he can associate whisky-making or whisky-selling with the service of his God? Who will presume to say he can use intoxicating drinks to the glory of God? Let a company of church-members prepare their glasses and ask the Lord's blessing on their drink, as on their daily bread,

if they dare. True, I know some church-members (I am sorry I know so many such) who appear to have more religion when they get into that condition they call "gently merry," than at any other time; but such religion! And the perpetual strain to which their ingenuity is driven to find some apology, palliation, or excuse—makers, sellers (not *SELLERS*), drinkers and all, shows how conscious they are that their cause needs it.

Were it not for the awful guilt of the unholy practice, some of these excuses would be amusing; some of them almost provoke a smile in spite of our knowledge of their guilt, they are so supremely ludicrous.

Boys, you who live long enough will soon be the men. What I have written about the whisky business, I have written to you, and for you. How clearly is the whole unholy business on the forbidden side of the line. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away."

The card-table, the race-course—what shall be said of them? What of the theater and the dance? Ah! the old story, "innocent amusement," "no harm," the whole defense.

It is not my purpose, has not been from the beginning, to discuss in these letters the merits of any of these questions; that work I leave to other pens; I only intend to point out the line, drawn by the Holy Spirit. You cannot fail to see on which side these and kindred pursuits lie.

I can safely challenge every living man and woman on the face of the whole earth, who attempts a defense of any one of these practices, or of all of them together, or of any other kindred to them, to produce one example of any one improved in health, in morals, or intellect, by any of them, or all of them.

I can point to confirmed gamblers by the thousand, who took their first lessons in the social card party of some gentleman's parlor, or on some private race-course. Perhaps I may have put the case a little too strong in denying any intellectual improvement from the race-course or the card-table. Possibly some young man, who has returned from both with empty pockets, may have taken a lesson he would not learn in any other school.

For the theater, I know it is claimed to have a vast refining, elevating, moralizing power. Perhaps it has, but if it has ever, in one instance, exerted that power, I have never had the evidence of it. All its influences are worldly, only worldly, nothing but worldly.

The dance! Will any Christian dare tell me the dance ever produced one solitary practical good result, one case of improvement in health, morals, or spirituality? Or will he tell me, if he dare, that a Christian is at liberty to engage in a practice that never was known to do any good? I can point to cases of the utter wreck of health, blight of morals, and starving of spirituality, by the thousand, all the result of the dance. May a Christian aid in a work like this? "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but of the world."

A single well authenticated fact will close this letter.

In all our large cities are fallen women by the hundred, who point back the warning finger to the theater and the dance, as the starting point of their ruin. Over the entrance to these, as surely as over the dens of infamy, to which they so often lead, may be written, as with the finger of the living God:

"THE WAY TO HELL GOING DOWN TO THE CHAMBERS OF DEATH."

Dear young friends, I once more "bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man"; and put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. Amen.

This implies that he is to attend to several duties that such titles would designate. But, to be as brief as the subject will allow, I will proceed to show their several duties to their churches or a few of them at least, as my mind may be guided with the word of God in this matter.

1. It is his duty to feed the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood, over which the Holy Ghost has made him the overseer. He should endeavor to lead his people out to meet God in the rich fields of Gospel light and glory and from one promise to another guide and instruct so as to ever keep before them their duty to God, to themselves, to one another and to the world. He should endeavor to feed them with the sincere milk of the word that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He should be very careful to find the mind of the Holy Spirit, and thus avoid teaching erroneous doctrine, which would do them great injury and result in God's dishonor. He should show them a pattern of good works, and strive to have them to imitate him who went about doing good.

2. It is his duty to study to be able to feed and instruct his people. Paul said to Timothy, study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." How can the preacher instruct if he himself be not instructed? How can he impart knowledge to the hearer if he himself has not gained knowledge and wisdom which is from above. He must study if he does justice to his people and the cause of Christ. No lazy pastor is fit to take the oversight of a flock so dear to the heart of Jesus.

3. It is his duty to live near to Jesus in prayer and meditation that his glory may be in the eyes of the church. This being the case he will preach in power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. He should be a man of prayer and humility. If the hearts of his people are to be warmed with the genial rays of the sun of righteousness he must let the truth as it is in Jesus burn upon the altar of his own heart. Heart-preparation is as much or more needed than that of his mind.

4. It is his duty to guide his flock in the proper discipline of the New Testament, see that they do not err in the execution of the laws of the King in Zion.

5. It is his duty to keep himself posted in regard to the passing events of the day, ever watching the movements of the hosts of God's elect, and those of the prince of darkness, and thus keep his people up with the times that they lag not behind the great army of the Lord. He should do this that his people under God, war a good warfare.

6. It is his duty to visit his people at their homes and there around their hearthstones encourage them by his presence and prayers, and thus get very near to them in their affections very highly for his work's sake. He should visit the poor as well as the rich of his flock and in no way show partiality.

7. It is his duty to visit the sick and afflicted, and by his presence and the sweet promises of the Gospel, cheer up their drooping spirits, and cause them to feel the presence of our blessed Saviour.

8. It is his duty to stand by the bedside of our dying people and the point them to the home of the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, whither he will receive their departing spirits. He should by songs, prayer and the promise of a blessed immortality cheer their souls as they are about to pass into the dark valley of the shadow of death.

9. It is his duty to follow their remains to their long resting place, and there commit their bodies to the earth from which they were taken, and with suitable prayer and exhortation comfort the mourning and warn the unprepared.

10. It is his duty to be fully consecrated to the work of the Lord. He should give himself wholly to these things, that his profiting may appear to all. How can he perform these things if he be not consecrated, his whole time, talent, energy. May the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls help our pastors in performing their important work.

JOE WOOD. All kinds of work, such as carding, with the character of the paper, selected in good style and on made-to-order.

In this country the St. Louis another stronghold of Romanism. It is said to be eight miles long, and to have a resident population of three thousand souls, and in summer it runs up to ten thousand. A few years ago brother Hamblin started the work there and a year ago organized a small church. He had had too much to do already, and his success was not so great here because of his inability to have Sunday appointments. Nevertheless, he laid a good foundation for future work. Having preached there by request of Brother H. for the past three months I feel I am capable of judging that field. It is very promising. We ought to have Baptist preaching there at least twice a month.

Fifteen or twenty miles from this, on Pearl river, is a large Baptist element that needs to be looked after. The people are calling for help—shall we give it?

These fields are almost completely destitute of Baptist preaching, for in all of them there are but three Baptist preachers, and they are engaged in secular work to sustain their families, while they do all they can for this people.

Five thousand dollars would do the work a fair start in all of these very destitute fields. Will the money be raised? How? When? Where? Come, brethren, start the ball rolling—send your money to the Board and they will gladly take hold of this work.

HYMAN WELSH, JR. NEW ORLEANS, April 8, 1879.

Christian Progress.

NO. 11.

The obligations assumed in becoming a member of a Christian church are various and far reaching. Conscientious converts, in the very proper desire to secure the benefits of their church connection, are in danger of overlooking its responsibilities. To the pastor and deacons and perhaps a few old and influential members, are left the work, necessary to promote the welfare of the church.

Every church member is under obligations to let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in Heaven. In order that his light may shine, it must not be obscured by worldly conformity. By becoming indifferently engrossed with even the laxest concerns of the world, he gathers around him a cloud through which his spiritual life will shine but dimly. This cloud is darker and darker, as he indulges in those things which are inconsistent with the spirit of the religion he professes. Participation in worldly amusements, gossiping, idle, and especially vulgar talking, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, will, ere long, so cloud the spiritual light, that so far from God's name being glorified, his name is dishonored and his cause injured by the connection with such an one with his church.

But connection with the church involves position as well as negative obligations. We are not only to refrain from doing what will injure the cause, but we are to do those things that will advance it. The church member must recommend the religion of Christ, by a well ordered life and a Godly conversation. We may have costly church buildings, eloquent and devoted pastors, and, in a word, use every appliance necessary for the conversion of sinners, and all will be in vain, until membership, by lives of piety and words of admonition, recommend the religion of Jesus.

Attention to the sick and dying is not the least of the duties of church-members. While this duty is not limited to those who are in the church, yet there is a peculiar obligation to nurse and comfort those who are of the household of faith. Apart from the ordinary feelings of humanity, there is a Christian sympathy which is reasonable and proper, that will naturally draw him to the bedside of a sick or dying one. Besides the help he might afford the physical man, he would delight to cheer such an one in his passage through the dark valley.

Attention to the fatherless and the widows should be esteemed a privilege; yet even as a duty it is often neglected. James 1: 27, says: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction." &c. Nothing can more strikingly exemplify the religion of Christ than sympathy and care for the afflicted and bereaved widow and little ones of our brethren. What a privilege to say a comfort-word to a soul in distress, and to see him in his distress and destitution!

The poor of the church are to be cared for, and the neglect of this duty by those who are able to attend to it, is reckoned by the Apostle John as evidence of a want of love to God, 1 John 3: 17. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Covetousness is a sin that has beset the church in every age, and we are far from being free of it yet. When a professor of religion has not enough of love to God and his neighbor to reach down into his pocket, he is a disgrace to the church, and ought to be regarded and treated as a heathen man and a publican.

M. T. MARTIN, Proprietor.

